A

LETTER

Out of the

COUNTRY,

To a MEMBER of this preſent

PARLIAMENT:

OCCASIONED

By a late LETTER to a Member of the

Houſe of Commons,

Concerning the BISHOPS lately in the *Tower*, and now under

SUSPENSION.

Licenſed *Nov.* 7. 1689. *J. F.*

LONDON, Printed for *Awnſham Churchill* at the *Black Swan* near *Amen-Corner*, 1689.

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A LETTER *to a Member of the Houſe of Commons, &c.*

SIR,

THE concern, which in your laſt to me you were pleas'd to expreſs for thoſe good Biſhops now under Suſpenſion for not taking the Oaths, and your earneſt Enquiry after ſome Expedient to prevent their utter Deſtitution, do well become that Character of Goodneſs and Generoſity, by which you are known no leſs than by your Name. It is ſome comfort to ſee, that a Perſon of your Underſtanding and Practice in the World, doth not yet deſpair, nor give up theſe Excellent but Unfortunate Perſons as loſt beyond poſſibility of recovery. Some begin to bewail their Fall already, as a thing unavoidable, and others may be caſting lots for the Garments; there is nothing that the Church of *England* in general deſires more than the Preſervation of theſe bright and ſhining Lights, that direct and adorn her; and cannot think with any patience that they ſhould be extinguiſhed in Diſhonour. They have the Compaſſion and the good Wiſhes of the People; which if they have not always Effect, yet may ſerve for a good Omen, and portend ſomething better than what now appears. But after all, there can be no ground of Hopes but by a Parliament; for the Act has left no other Remedy, and we cannot expect that the Diſpenſing Power ſhould now revive to ſave thoſe from whom it received its mortal Wound in the laſt Reign: Now Providence has ſo far favour'd their Cauſe, that a Parliament is aſſembled within the Time aſſign'd for taking the Oaths, and before the laſt Severities are to fall upon the Refuſers; and who can tell but it may be with a Deſign to give that great Aſſembly an opportunity to find ſome Relief for theſe Reverend Biſhops, who have deſerv'd ſo well of this Church and Kingdom, and whoſe abſolute Ruine cannot but be diſhonourable and invidious.

I do not pretend to juſtifie their Refuſal of taking the Oaths; but wiſh with all my heart they would yet take them, and bring their Conſcience to go along with the Stream of the Publick Judgment: that they would conſider what allowance is to be made for the real Neceſſities of a Kingdom, and whether the Safety of a People muſt not be preferr'd to all ordinary humane Rule. We of the Church of *England* have the greateſt reaſon in the World to wiſh this; for we cannot but account it one of the greateſt Calamities that can befall us, to ſee the chiefeſt and beſt of our Guides divided from the major part and general Conſent of the Nation. But our Affliction will be inſupportable, if we muſt ſee our ſelves deprived of ſuch Men, under whoſe Conduct we have found Safety and Honour in the moſt difficult Times; and ſee them, whom we reverence and love as Fathers, diſgrac'd, and depos'd, and undone, becauſe they boggle in a kind of moot Point of Conſcience, and cannot ſatisfie their Minds about the Oaths now enjoyn'd.

Nor can I much wonder that ſeveral of the Clergy have their Scruples upon this occaſion; for Men of Retirement and Study are not ſo quick in a Change, as Stateſmen, and thoſe who have the Experience and Practice of the World. As thoſe who keep within doors, are not ſo ſoon ſenſible of alteration of Weather, as thoſe who are abroad and live in the open Air. Beſides, the Arguments for the maintenance of our rightful Liberties and juſt Defence, and all the grounds of our Common and Neceſſary preſervation have been ſo miſerably abus'd, by reſtleſs and ſeditious Men, that they have loſt a great deal of their Operation. They have been ſo often pretended without reaſon, that when the real Caſe of

Neceſſity happens, many may be apt to ſuſpect it for Counterfeit and meer Pretence; as thoſe who have been too often cheated with falſe Alarms, may not ſo readily be brought to arm and prepare upon a real one.

The Parliament therefore, that made this Act enjoyning theſe Oaths, could not but foreſee that ſeveral of the Clergy might probably be under great difficulties upon this Occaſion; and upon this Proſpect thought fit to exempt Twelve Perſons from ſome part of the Penalties of the Statute, ſo far as to leave them at the King's Diſcretion for a third Part of their Revenues; which ſhews that in the Opinion of this very Parliament there might be ſome Refuſers not unworthy of Favour. But it is poſſible they might not foreſee all that happen'd, nor think that the Rigour and Severity of that Act ſhould in a manner wholly fall upon ſuch Perſons, who are the Chief for Merit as well as Authority in our Church, and that they only ſhould feel the Extremities of that Law, who had deſerv'd another kind of acknowledgment and return from the Nation, for that unparallell'd Zeal for the Proteſtant Religion, and for the Privileges and Liberty of the Subject, which in ſo ſignal a manner they ſhew'd in the laſt Reign.

It is little more than a year, ſince moſt of the Biſhops, who are now ſo unfortunate as not to be able to reconcile their Conſciences to the Oaths, were hurried into Priſon for their oppoſition to Popery and Slavery. The Zeal and Courage which they made appear upon that occaſion, cannot ſo ſoon be forgot; for who cannot but have yet a lively remembrance, how ſenſible the whole Nation was affected with their Sufferings and Enlargements? how all ſorts of People were concern'd, as if the Fate of the Kingdom had been ty'd to theirs, and all muſt have been ruin'd or preſerv'd with them? I might mention the Malice and Virulence of their Proſecution, and how near Treaſon it was then thought by ſome to oppoſe King *James* his Arbitrary Powers. But I do not now call the Sufferings of theſe great Men in remembrance with any deſign to render the Inſtruments of them odious: But to let you ſee how ſtrange a thing it will appear to the preſent Age and to Poſterity, that thoſe Prelates who had eſcap'd the fury of Papiſts, and had made ſo glorious a Confeſſion for Proteſtant Religion and *Engliſh* Liberties, ſhould in ſo little a compaſs of time come to be diſgrac'd, and depos'd, and ruin'd under a Proteſtant Government, without any high Crime laid to their Charge, but only becauſe they cannot prevail with their Conſciences to take the Oaths; which tho' I think to be juſt and neceſſary, yet cannot but acknowledge to have ſome Circumſtances, that are unuſual and extraordinary.

It might be expected upon the Deliverance of this Nation from Popery and Tyranny, that thoſe who had ſtood in the gap, and diſtinguiſh'd themſelves by the check and ſtop which they gave to the Progreſs of thoſe ſpreading plagues, might have been proportionably diſtinguiſh'd by the Countenance and Favour of the next Settlement; but the Ruine of ſuch men under this Government will appear unaccountable, when we conſider what Lenity it has us'd to all ſorts of Offenders; when we ſee few or none of all thoſe Perfidious Wretches, who joyn'd in the Attempt of enſlaving and undoing this Nation, ſo much as call'd in queſtion; when the Proſecutors of the Biſhops are not only receiv'd into mercy, but into favour. What can People think, What can they ſay, when they ſee the chief Champions for Proteſtant Religion and Liberty to be the only Men that are ruin'd by the Change? What will foreign Nations think of us, ſince even among them the Names of theſe Biſhops are become venerable? for their Reputation has reach'd as far as Proteſtant Religion does extend. Thoſe who have applauded them

them from far, and acknowledg'd them as the chiefeſt and braveſt Defenders of the common Cauſe; what will they think, when they come to hear, that after the deliverance of the Kingdom, thoſe whom they admir'd at ſuch a diſtance, are cover'd with diſhonour, and depriv'd of every thing, but the Reputation and Conſcience of their Merits? There will be but poor Encouragement for any hereafter to hazard themſelves for the Publick good, while they have before their Eyes ſuch ſad and frightful Recompenſes as this.

Nay, tho' there had been no proviſion at all made for any other ſcrupulous perſon in this caſe, yet the ſignal merit of theſe Biſhops might leave room for a Special Plea in their behalf. But when *Quakers* are thought not unworthy of particular proviſion and tenderneſs; a Sect who are known to this Kingdom by no good Office or uſefulneſs; but are fallen under the juſt diſpleaſure and deteſtation of the Kingdom for their conjunction with King *James*; when theſe come to be humour'd in their Nonſence, excus'd from Oaths, exempted from the Penalties of this Act, while this ſtands in the very Body of our Law, and is allowed throughout the whole Kingdom: how can any one, without indignation ſee the chief Biſhops of our Church, and the celebrated Patriots of our Liberties, ſtill in unbecoming and miſerable Sacrifice to this Act, and endure its laſt Extremities, from which ſuch humorſom and ſullen Impoſtors are exempted?

Now theſe Biſhops Character and manner of Life diſpoſe them to peace; their proper buſineſs, which is not of this World, is not likely to give them leave to be over buſie in troubling the Affairs of it; their Zeal for the Proteſtant Religion, which is beyond diſpute, their Love of their Country and the Laws, which appear'd ſufficiently to the whole Kingdom: theſe things, in my judgment, tho' they do not take the Oaths, are much a better and more ſolid ſecurity than any *Quakers* Declaration can amount to.

Now as I cannot but think it reaſonable, that theſe worthy Biſhops ſhould have ſome relief in their preſent diſtreſs; before it be too late: ſo I am of opinion, this may be a more proper time to do it, than when the Act was in making. For then there might be good reaſon to make ſome ſhew of rigour; for the Government was but new, and required, that all ſorts of Men ſhould declare Allegiance to it: but now the Act having operated ſufficiently, and the generality of the Clergy having taken the Oaths; the Examples of theſe Biſhops can have no ill influence, and the favour that ſhall be ſhewed them will be only Perſonal, and draw no conſequence of danger after it; for the Entrance of the Church is ſufficiently ſhut up, ſince none can receive either Orders or Preferment, without taking the Oaths.

And as it can be no prejudice to the Government, to preſerve theſe good Men: ſo I am ſure it will be very honourable, and give it credit both at home and abroad. You know as well as I, that there cannot be any thing more acceptable to the generality of the Kingdom. You can ſcarce meet with any man, that will not wiſh it were in his power to reſtore them. I have ſpoken with ſeveral of your Houſe, and with ſome of the Lords, and I find all well-wiſhers: What then can hinder the effect of ſo univerſal an Inclination? I have not the honour to be of your Houſe at this time; it was indifferent to me whether it ſhould be you or I; nay, I am better ſatisfi'd, that you are there, ſince I know you wiſh as well as I can to this matter, and have greater dexterity and credit in the Houſe to bring

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it to pass. They are much mistaken, who fancy that the suspended Bishops have by their refusal of the Oaths forfeited all that credit which they got with the People in King *James* his time; for, as far as I can observe, the People are rather sorry, than angry with them for not complying; and when they are once deprived, will be much more sensible of their sufferings, which is visible, than of the reason of it, which will not be so easily comprehended. And even the Clergy who have taken the Oaths, are so far from diminishing the Affection and Reverence they had for their Bishops, that they rather increase from the consideration of their misfortune. The Clergy look upon the Deprivation, which without relief from this Parliament, must shortly fall upon their Bishops, to be more a punishment to the Dioceses, than the Dioceſans. In proper speaking, they are rather depriv'd of their Bishops, than the Bishops of their Preferments; and I dare say, if there were any appearance of hope, the respective Dioceses would quickly petition for the Restauration of their Governours, and beseech you in the most tender and passionate manner in the World, that you would not leave them Orphans while their Fathers are alive; and they are like to continue so while these Bishops are living, since it can scarce be conceiv'd, that any worthy Men will be forward to accept these Preferments, and thereby shut the door against their Predecessors, so as to make their return impossible. For notwithstanding Deprivation, as long as the Places are void, the depriv'd Bishops are in a possibility of being restor'd; but when the Seats are once fill'd, there can be no remedy; so that the Successors, and not the Law, will be look'd upon as the Deprivers: And if the Ambition of any should be so prevalent, as to despise the invidiousness of such Preferments, they must consider, that they will have but little authority over their Clergy or People, and can do but little good, where they are judg'd to intrude to the prejudice of the old Possessors, for whom both Clergy and People have so great esteem; and tho' they may have legal right and possession, and be Bishops and Fathers in Law, yet as long as their Predecessors are in being, and in possession of the hearts of their People, and look'd upon as depriv'd not for any Canonical Reasons, but for their Misfortune rather than their Fault; the New-comers can expect to be but sorrily belov'd, and will have great difficulty to maintain the Peace and Unity of their Church. Besides, the Reversion of the Bishopricks to be voided upon this occasion doth not seem to me to be very desirable upon another account, even tho they should become vacant in an ordinary way; for those who succeed them will find it a hard task to come up to the pitch of their Predecessors merit and reputation, and will probably be lessen'd by comparison with those that are forc'd to quit; but when men will enter upon the ruine of those to whom they are found so inferior, their reception is like to be but very indifferent.

Since therefore it is not an impossible thing, while the Parliament sits, to restore the Bishops now under suspension, and it can be no prejudice to the Government, since it is so generally wish'd, so honourable, and at the same time so safe, since their final deprivation may bring great inconveniences, and not the least advantage to the Publick; It is to be hop'd, that the Wisdom of this Parliament will find out some Expedient to restore them to the Exercise of their Office, and the Church to the Benefit of their Administration.

FINIS.

A LETTER Out of the COUNTRY, &c.

Dear S. I R,

SInce you ſeem to deſire my thoughts of the Paper you ſent me, altho I am at preſent pretty much indiſpoſed, yet I had much rather give my ſelf a little uneaſineſs than fruſtrate your expectation, not queſtioning but your Friendſhip can make allowances for the miſtakes, and little peeviſhneſſes too, to which Sickneſs may ſometimes betray one; for I muſt confeſs if I had not thought my ſelf pretty much maſter of my own Notions as to this point, I ſhould not have attempted giving you an account of them at this time.

As to the Letter then about the Biſhops, I cannot but ſay, That as to the main Deſign (at leaſt as it appears to me,) I muſt approve of it, as I'm ſure you will ſay, I ſhall of any thing that ſounds in favour of thoſe excellent Perſons, for whom I have ſo particular a veneration, that you your ſelf can witneſs I have often wiſht there might be ſome Expedient found out to keep them from ſuffering the rigour of that Law, to which they ſo wilfully expoſe themſelves. And altho I ſtill continue in the ſame Sentiments, yet I cannot ſay I approve of the Methods propoſed;

ed; for I doubt he has begun at the wrong end: For in my apprehenſion, he ſhould in the firſt place have applyed himſelf to the Biſhops, and perſuaded them to have deſired before he had ſo peremptorily preſcribed the giving a Diſpenſation to the Parliament. But alas! I know how very hard it is, not to be partial where one has particular affection; it having been a failing to which I have been too much inclined my ſelf, even in the ſame caſe. But having taken ſome pains to place things in the true Light, perhaps it may be a piece of Service to ſhew them to others in it. And to that purpoſe I ſhall crave leave to conſider the two differing Matters of Fact, that of refuſing the Declaration from King *James*, and the Oath to King *William* and Queen *Mary*. As to the proof of both, I think there needs not much evidence, ſince the whole Nation is their Teſtimonial in that Point: And for the Inferences that may be made by either ſide, I deſire to ſet them apart for the preſent, and to conſider the Actions in their naked circumſtances. And in the firſt place, Here is an ill thing impoſed on them by King *James*, and not only ſo, but they are required to be Parties in it, and ſpread it all over the Nation. And now I would only ask this Queſtion, Whether it was their Duty to refuſe this Command or no? If not, they ſinn'd (I'm ſure, according to their own Doctrine) in diſobeying King *James*; but if it was their Duty to refuſe (as I ſuppoſe we all grant,) then we may gather up this obſervation by the by, That the Commands of Kings may, nay ought to be refuſed, if in themſelves unlawful, that is, againſt the Law of the Land, (for that is their main Objection to the Declaration.) But altho they had been very faulty if they had complyed, yet, without admitting the Popiſh Doctrine of Supererogation and Merit, I cannot ſee why they ſhould boaſt, or we magnify them ſo extreamly for doing that which was their indiſpen-

indispensable Duty, may I not consider those excellent Persons have too much Humility to do it, or else they had not heard our Saviour's Lesson so well as I believe they have, who in the 17th of St. Luke, very. 9th. asks, if a Master doth thank a Servant for doing those things that were commanded him? And answers, I trow not. To which he presently subjoins in the 10th verse, *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable Servants, we have done that which was our Duty to do.* But altho nothing can hold weight in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and no Flesh must glory in the presence of God; yet *Elihu* has well observed, *Job* 35. 8. *Thy Righteousness may profit a Son of Man.* And on that account it must be owned, that there never was Action by which a whole Nation was more obliged than by that of the Bishops. But yet we should be too partial to them, and unjust to others, should we suffer them to engross all the Praise of that great and glorious Scene; the remembrance of which puts me almost into an extasie. For was there ever any sight so transporting, as that to see the Church asserting, the Law defending, the Nobility assisting, and all agreeing in the defence of our true and ancient Liberties, and that to the face, and in defiance of Arbitrary and Dispensing Power. For how gallantly soever the Bishops behaved themselves in that undertaking, had not some of their inferiour Clergy been as forward as themselves; and had they not been as bravely seconded by the Lords, and Lawyers too, neither their Courage nor Innocency had been of any use either to themselves or us. So that to be just, we must divide the Praise and Thanks due to that great Action; which I am very unwilling to leave, because, alas! I must now divert to a less pleasing Subject, Their relaxing of the Oaths. And how many Partners soever they had in their applauded part, I find they must bear the blame of this a-

lone; for no body pretends to ſhare with them in that; ſo that they muſt either ſtand or fall by themſelves. And truly, I ſhall be ſo kind to them, as to make them Judges in their own Cauſes; for to go through the whole Diſpute would be much too long for a Letter: But I only deſire the diſſenting Biſhops to review, and conſider their own Declaration of *December* the 10*th*. 1688, for ſo I think I may call it, being ſigned by ſo many of them; for *W. Cant.* is (I am ſure) the firſt Name, and the Biſhop of *Ely* was not only one that ſign'd, but carried it to the then P. of *O.* And I would fain aſk what their Lordſhips then thought; for if they did not then think King *James* had diſſerted the Government, I am very confident they would not have done what they then did. For I am ſure they take upon them as if there was no King in *Iſrael*. And becauſe 'tis poſſible you may not have the Declaration by you, I will, with your good leave tranſcribe ſome part of it.

We do therefore unanimouſly reſolve to apply to the Prince of Orange, *who with ſo great kindneſs to theſe Kingdoms, ſo vaſt Expence, and ſo much hazard to his own Perſon, hath undertaken, by endeavouring to procure a Free Parliament, to reſcue us, with as little effuſion as poſſible of Chriſtian Blood, from the imminent Dangers of Popery and Slavery.*

And we do hereby declare, That we will with our utmoſt Endeavours aſſiſt His Highneſs in the obtaining ſuch a Parliament with all ſpeed, wherein our Laws, our Liberties, and Properties may be ſecured, the Church of England *in particular, with a due liberty to Proteſtant Diſſenters, and in general the Proteſtant Religion and Intereſt over the whole World, may be ſupported and encouraged, to the Glory of God, the Happineſs of the Eſtabliſht Government in theſe Kingdoms, and the advantage of all Princes and States in Chriſtendom that may be herein concerned.*

And

And in the mean time we will endeavour to preſerve Peace, taking care to diſarm all Papiſts.

And if there be any thing more to be performed by us, for promoting his Highneſs generous Intentions for the publick Good, we ſhall be ready to do it as occaſion ſhall require.

These are the very words of the Declaration which was ſign'd and delivered too by the Perſons above-mentioned, ſo that we have reaſon to look upon it as their own Act and Deed: And muſt therefore beg leave to be reſolved in one Point, and that is, By what Authority their Lordſhips did this? And I cannot ſuppoſe they will ſay it was done by any Deputation from King *James*, or any Power they derived from him; ſo then it ſeems they did it in their own right. And if ſo, 'tis pretty indifferent to me whether King *James* diſſerted or no; for let them take which ſide they pleaſe, either will do my buſineſs. For if they will own the Diſſertion, they yield the Point we have all this while contended for; but if they deny that, and ſay that King *James* was at that time actually their King, then I perceive that Subjects may preſcribe to, nay, force their Kings to do their Duty. But what becomes of *Paſſive Obedience* all this while I wonder? For here we find our good Biſhops not only applauding, but joining with, and aſſiſting that very Perſon whom their King *James* called an Invader, and whoſe very Errand hither, as they themſelves at that time very well knew, was only to teach him better Behaviour.

And how they can avoid one of theſe Conſequences (for we may allow them their choice), I muſt confeſs I cannot very well ſee: For the involuntary Return which King *James* did make to *London*, does not, in my Conceit, much alter the matter, unleſs we will allow Kings to play at *Boe-peep* with their Government; and now they will be ſeen, and now they will not. But I hope the Perſons I was

now speaking of, have too much Gravity, as well as Understanding, to approve of, much less to act their Part in such Boys-Play, especially in things of this Nature and Consequence. And yet, to our great wonder, as well as trouble, we find those very wise Men recalling their Consent, flying from their Subscriptions, and nauseating all those great and glorious Designs they then seemed so eagerly to pursue: For since that very Free Parliament has been obtain'd, and the Rights of this particular Church and Nation, as well as the Interest of the *Protestant Religion* in general, secured, as far as Humane Wisdom can reach; now they loath this *Manna*, and long for the *Flesh-Pots* of *Egypt* again; and with the Men in the Gospel, they will not have this Man (though courted before) to reign over them. Now what can one say to Men of this Temper? Nay, what can God himself do for them, since they are displeased with Heaven for granting their Desires, and quarrel with Providence because the Change was not made exactly by their Model, although, for any thing I perceive, they were not very well agreed about it themselves. For should we have attended till they had pleased themselves with a Scheme of our Deliverance, 'tis probable we might all, before that, have been swallow'd up in that Common Ruine which was then just ready to overflow the Nation. But pardon me, dear Sir, if my Zeal for the Publick have transported me too far in this Point; For it would raise something of Indignation in any *English* Man, that had a true sense of his Countries Interest, to see People sent abroad (God forbid I should say, by the Bishops; for I have a much better Opinion of them; but however, by those that pretend to be of their Party) to proclaim, That now *Iniquity is Establisht by a Law*. But whether what they are pleased to call *Iniquity Establisht by a Law*, is not at a venture better than a Lawless Power, that will both Establish and Maintain Idolatry

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and Cruelty: I fancy is a Point that will be pretty eaſily decided, if left to the Majority of Voices in this Nation.

But I have been hitherto relating only Matters of Fact, which, I hope I have done ſo impartially, that the only concluſion I have made, I believe will be found to flow very Naturally from my Premiſes; that is indeed, from the Declaration that was both ſigned and ſent by theſe Worthy Biſhops.

Now to return to the Letter you ſent me. I find the Author does not only think the Oaths Lawful, but Neceſſary; wherein I muſt agree with him, as I do alſo in wiſhing the Biſhops would yet take them, and, as he well ſays, *bring their Conſciences to go along with the Stream of the Publick Judgment: That they would conſider what allowance is to be made for the Real Neceſſities of a Kingdom; and whether the Safety of a People muſt not be preferr'd to all ordinary humane Rule.* And theſe being the very Words of their own Advocate, I know not how to put my *Queries* into more proper Terms; and therefore recite them. And where *Salus Populi eſt Suprema Lex*, is the avow'd Maxim of the Government and Conſtitution, one would think it ſhould not require much deliberation to anſwer the Queſtion. But now, if they pleaſe, we will come to diſpute the matter in cool Blood, and ſhall not reſtrain this great Law only to the Subject: but by the Safety of the People, underſtand the Government in the Concrete: For we know the Saying is derived from the *Old Romans*, among whom the People, with their Senate, did carry the Face of the Supream Magiſtracy: And we may be ſure the Safety of the whole was intended by it. So that in our Conſtitution it would be very hard to ſhut out the King from his Share in it, and ſay, he was not at all concern'd in that Maxim: But yet in admitting a Head, I would not exclude the Body. And al-

although 'tis poſſible Kingdoms may have ſuffer'd by the Peoples Encroachments upon the Royal Prerogative, yet to ſay, That a Government can ſuffer in no other Inſtance, would be full as abſurd as to ſay, That a Man can be Mortally wounded no where but in his Head: But we are ſure there are parts in our Body as fatal to be touch'd as the Brain it ſelf; and therefore ought to be guarded with equal care: And in all well-order'd Commonwealths the Rights of the Subjects ought to be as Sacred as thoſe of the Soveraign: Or elſe we ſhould invert the very End and Deſign of Government in its firſt Inſtitution; which certainly was not erected only for the agrandiſing one ſingle Perſon or Family, but was intended for the Safety of the whole: Therefore in thoſe Caſes we are not tied up to the Rigour and Words of a Law: For if the Moral Equity, and the Deſign of the Commandment, is better obſerv'd by breaking the Letter of it, 'tis ſurely very lawful, nay, our Duty to do it. And this holding in Divine, muſt by a ſtronger Reaſon do ſo in Humane Laws: for the Poſitive Precepts of the *Decalogue* it ſelf have been, and are frequently diſpenſed with, and that by God's permiſſion: As for inſtance, The great Commandment of the *Sabbath*, although ſo eſſential a part of the *Jewiſh* Law and Service, that one calls it, *The very Sacrament of the Worſhip of the True God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, in oppoſition to Idolatry.* Whether it deſerves that Title, or no, I know not; yet I think I may very properly ſtile it, *The Diſtinguiſhing Character of the Jewiſh Church*; and that it is a Precept which is the oftest repeated, more Promiſes made to the Obſervers of it, and more Judgments threaten'd to the Breakers of it, than to all the other Commands of the Law: So that I ſhould make this ſwell to a Volume, ſhould I tranſcribe all the Texts wherein the Obſervation of the Sabbath is enjoyn'd. And yet, for all that God ſeems to lay ſo particular a ſtreſs on

that Commandment, you ſee our Saviour blames the *Jews* for adhering ſo ſtrictly to the Letter of it, for the ſaving of the Life of an Ox or Aſs, was to be preferr'd before their Obedience to it. But waving all thoſe Inſtances which our Saviour gives us in the Goſpel, wherein the *Jews* themſelves did break the Sabbath, and were blameleſs: I ſhall inſiſt only on one Story in the *Maccabees*, which is pretty much to this purpoſe, 1 *Mac.* 2. beginning at the 31. Verſe, where we have the Relation of the Fate of thoſe poor miſtaken *Jews*, who, for fear of prophaning the Sabbath, would not ſo much as ſtop the Paſſages againſt their Enemies, but let them come in, and kill them tamely, without ſtriking a ſtroke. But *Mattathias* and his Sons, though as great Zealots for the Law as any we read of, yet ſeemed to underſtand that Point better; and in *ver.* 41. 'tis ſaid, *At that time therefore they decreed, ſaying, Whoſoever ſhall come to make battle with us on the Sabbath day, we will fight againſt him; neither will we die all, as our brethren that were murdered in the ſecret places*; which was ſurely a lawful, as well as prudent Reſolution. And truly juſt ſuch wiſe *Martyrs* ſhould we have been to the Fifth Commandment, as they were to the Fourth, had we purſued the Notion of *Paſſive Obedience* ſo far as ſome would have had us; by which we ſhould have betray'd both our Religion and our Friends, and at once have render'd our ſelves the Prey and Scorn of our Enemies: For we are not to think that God Almighty will work Miracles for the maintaining of our fanciful Opinions and Comments on his Law: For if we will lay Neceſſities on our ſelves, and chuſe Deſtruction when he allows means of Eſcape, it is but reaſonable we ſhould periſh: For that, generally ſpeaking, is his method, as to this World, as well as to the next. We muſt do our part to ſave our ſelves, or he will never help us; There muſt be the Sword of *Gideon*, as well as the Sword of the

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Lord, if we delight to get the Victory: for we see that God suffer'd the *Passive Jews* to perish, but bless the *Active Maccabees* with most miraculous Victories, while in the defence of the Law they broke the Commandment. And a great many more Arguments might be drawn from the same Topick, but that I fear to swell this to too large a bulk: Therefore to conclude this Point, I shall only recite what our Saviour saith of the Fourth Commandment, *Mark* 2. 27. *The Sabbath was made for Man, not Man for the Sabbath:* Which may as properly be apply'd to the Fifth: for we may as truly say, Kings were made for the People, not the People for Kings.

But I doubt you will think that I forget my Letter all this while, but I was so taken up with his Will, That the Bishops would take the Oath, that I could not but lay all I could to induce them to it: But alas! so many have fail'd in that Attempt, that I dare hardly hope my weak Arguments should be more powerful. But now to my apprehension this is downright Demonstration, that either it is lawful to obey *K. W.* or 'tis not; if 'tis lawful, why then may not any Man swear they will do so? For certainly, any body may lawfully swear to do a lawful thing, especially when the Law requires them to do it. But indeed, if they do not think it lawful to obey King *William*, then they have no reason to take the Oath, nor truly has the Author very much to expect that the King or Parliament should grant Dispensations to them that avow'dly disown their Authority, and disobey their Laws. But perhaps it will be urged, that this is not the Law; but I'm sure our Saviour tells us, *Luke* 11. 23. *He that is not with me is against me:* And 'tis so hard a thing to be perfectly Neuter, that all sides suspect them that pretend to be so: Therefore it would give great satisfaction, if these Worthy Persons would declare themselves. And besides,

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it is ſo reaſonable a thing to give Security to that Government from which they receive Protection, that no Sect refuſes doing it after ſome way or other: And if the Biſhops do really ſtumble at the Oath, yet 'tis poſſible for them to contrive ſome other way of binding themſelves as firm, and giving as good ſecurity to the Government, as if they had taken that. But 'tis their part to propoſe it, for they are not to expect that the Parliament ſhould be projecting ways to evade their own Laws, or offer Relief to thoſe Grievances that were never complain'd of to them: The Biſhops know the way, and alſo know their Right of Petitioning; which makes ſome people ſuſpect, that they had not ſo much to ſay for their refuſing the Oaths, as they had for the Declaration; or elſe they would not have been ſo wanting to themſelves, as not to have done it before now, unleſs the neglect proceed from a worſe Principle, that of the ſlighting and deſpiſing the Government it ſelf. And they cannot more effectually clear themſelves from that Imputation, than by propoſing ſomething that may be equivalent to the Oath, and conſequently as good Security to the Government: Which if refuſed, they will then have ſomething to ſay for themſelves, and may lawfully complain. But I believe, Sir, that you have reaſon to think it would be accepted if offer'd; and at a venture I dare promiſe them your Vote; for the Author of this Letter is not the only one that has wiſh'd ſome Expedient might be found out, that thoſe excellent Perſons might continue in the Station they ſo well became.

The reſt of the Letter is only Panegyrick of the Biſhops, and a Prophecy of the Reſentment that the whole Nation is to expreſs when the Sentence comes to Deprivation: And as to the *Encomium* he makes of them, I ſhould be very well pleaſed with it in the *Poſitive* Degree; but *Compariſons*, they ſay, are odious: But why they ſhould be advanced to the

Superlative, only for not taking the Oaths, I do not ſo well underſtand; for we have Two of the famous Seven, who may pretend to as great Merit as any, for I am ſure they ſuffered as much as the other Five needed to have done; and I think do not deſerve the leſs from the Nation, becauſe they have not made a Faction and Schiſm in it, as the others have, nor been the occaſion of the expence of ſo much Treaſure and Blood too. For whatever obligation we in *England* may have to them, I doubt the poor *Iriſh* Proteſtants have not ſo; for I believe you, and a great many in your Houſe, are ſatisfied, That if the Church of *England* had unanimouſly come in to King *William* at firſt, ſo that he could have ſent his Army over while the Proteſtants in *Ireland* had been in a condition to have aſſiſted them, that Kingdom had been reduced long ago; and conſequently ſo many Lives ſaved as it has, and will coſt to do it now.

But this is not a Subject for *me* to inſiſt on, tho it deſerves *their* conſideration: But I perceive the Author thinks there is no falling from Grace; elſe he would not have concluded that after one Eminent good Act, it was impoſſible for them to do an ill. It would indeed be very happy if one generous piece of Piety would render one infallible ever after; but I fear the rule will fail, though I heartily wiſh it may not in thoſe Reverend Perſons, for whom I have as great and true a Veneration as any body can pretend to. But in caſe they ſhould think fit to prefer Quiet and Privacy, before Profit and State; and adhering to their own humour, before ſerving God and the Church in the places they ſo well fill'd; if I ſay they ſhould think fit to do this, I cannot ſuppoſe thoſe diſmal conſequences muſt neceſſarily follow that this Author foretels: for I fear the generality of the People do not ſo much value true worth, as to be concerned for what good Men ſuffer, if they themſelves are at eaſe, and in ſafety.

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But good words coſt nothing, and they can eaſily afford them, that will not do any thing more to ſerve either King or Biſhop: Which may be one reaſon why both have been ſo out in their computation. For King *James* making his Muſters by his Addreſſes, I'm ſure reckon'd without his Hoſt: and I fancy the Biſhops have been a little out in their Count too, as to the numbers of the Clergy that would refuſe the Oaths; as 'tis poſſible this Author may be in his. But indeed where the diſſenting Biſhops are the whole Church, a very ſmall Party may by the ſame reaſon be the whole Nation; and both contained in a good honeſt Conventicle. Nay, for any thing I know, at the rate ſome men talk, both Church and Nation may in a few years be reduced, as the Church of the *Donatiſts* was, to one ſingle Perſon. But I do not deſire to be a Prophet in that point, for I do from my Soul wiſh that we may be all united as in one Faith, ſo in one Communion; that we may with one Heart, and one Mouth Praiſe God, and Pray for our King, whom God has been pleaſed to make the Glorious Inſtrument of the greateſt Deliverance that ever yet happened to the Reformed Church. And truly it does ſeem as ſtrange to me, that any body that calls himſelf a Church of *England* Man doth not both ſee and acknowledge that, as it does to this Author to think that the great Aſſertors of the Proteſtant Religion and *Engliſh* Liberties ſhould be Suſpended, and Deprived. But the latter is ſtill in their own choice, and let them but qualify themſelves for Their Majeſties Favour, by complying with the Law, and I do not queſtion but they ſhall receive ſuch marks of it, as ſhall be proportionable even to their Merits. Which I do think as great as any body can pretend to, but without admitting the Doctrine of Compenſation, I cannot ſay that the Sepererogating in one point of the Law ſhould give one Licenſe to break another: For

St. *James* tells us, *Chap.* 2. 10. That *whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.* And I ſuppoſe this holds in Humane as well as in the Divine Law. Therefore unleſs they do think fit to comply, I cannot help it though the Law do look upon them as Criminals, though I muſt always admire their Perſonal Endowments, and particular qualifications for Government, which makes it ſo deſirable they ſhould keep their Stations. But if they think fit to deprive the Church of their further Service, (for after all the exclamation that is, or can be made againſt it, 'tis apparently their own doings, becauſe their choice) although the Proverb, *That ſeldom comes a better*, may be very likely to hold in their Caſe, yet I do not think there is ſo great a ſcarcity of Worthy Men in the Church, but that it may be poſſible to find out four or five as good, who may be able to ſupply, even their places, and come up to their pitch. Of which the two laſt Vacancies is a convincing inſtance to me; for by that time that the Dioceſſes of *Worceſter* and *Chicheſter* are thoroughly acquainted with their New Biſhops, I do not believe they will think they have changed much for the worſe; although the two Predeceſſors were as Eminent, and as good men, as any they have left behind them.

But I fear I have exceeded the bounds of a Letter, tho' I hope not thoſe of your Patience, for I queſtion not but you can pardon a Fault to which I was betray'd by my obedience to your Commands; for all your deſires you know are ſo to,

Dear Sir,

Nov. 1. 89.

Your moſt Affectionate Friend,

and Servant.

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